

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 02935 020949Z

11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 SY-05

/062 W

----- 053318

R 020819Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4141

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2935

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SY

SUBJECT: SARG COURT SENTENCES MEMBERS OF TERRORIST "ARAB COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION"

REF: DAMASCUS 2584 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: SPECIALLY CONVENED STATE SECURITY COURT ISSUED VERDICTS 30 JULY ON MEMBERS OF ARAB COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION ARRESTED EARLY JULY FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA. FIVE TERRORISTS WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH AND NINE TO LONG PRISON TERMS. THE FIVE CONDEMNED WERE EXECUTED ON 2 AUGUST. END SUMMARY.

2. ON 30 JULY A SPECIAL STATE SECURITY COURT HEADED BY BAATH REGIONAL COMMAND MEMBER FAHMI AL-YUSUFI AND COMPOSED OF FOUR OTHER MEMBERS (THREE MILITARY AND ONE CIVILIAN) ISSUED ITS VERDICT IN THE CASES OF 14 SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN MEMBERS OF THE "ARAB COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION" (ACO) ACCUSED OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 02935 020949Z

VARIOUS ACTS OF TERRORISM AND SABOTAGE IN SYRIA. FIVE, IN-

CLUDING THE GROUP'S LEADER, ALI AHMED GHADBAN, A PALESTINIAN, WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH. IN ADDITION TO DHADBAN, DEATH SENTENCES WERE IMPOSED ON MUHAMMED GHATHADDIN SHIHA (SYRIAN); WALID MUHAMMED 'ADWAN, (PALESTINIAN); ALI ABDULLAH HAWRANI (PALESTINIAN); AND MUHAMMED KHAYR ABDUL RA'UF NAYIF (PALESTINIAN). ALL EXCEPT GHADBAN WERE CONVICTED OF "TERRORIST ACTS CAUSING DEATH OF A HUMAN BEING AND DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS." GHADBAN WAS SENTENCED FOR BEING AN "ACCESSORY" IN THESE CRIMES. ALL WERE EXECUTED BY HANGING 0500 2 AUGUST.

3. TWO OTHERS CONDEMNED TO DEATH HAD THEIR SENTENCES COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT AT HARD LABOR BY THE COURT BECAUSE OF THEIR "YOUTH AND PENITENT ATTITUDE." THEY ARE MUHAMMED HISHAM QASSEM (SYRIAN) AND MUHAMMED MAJID SHIHA (SYRIAN).

4. JAMILAH AL-BATRASH (PALESTINIAN FEMALE), FARIS MURAD (PALESTINIAN) AND HAYTHUM NA'AL (SYRIAN) WERE SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT AT HARD LABOR. FOUR OTHERS, MAHMUD AL-BATRASH (PALESTINIAN), BEHATH (POSSIBLE MISPRINT) KINAFATI (SYRIAN), NABIL KINAFATI (SYRIAN) AND SULTI (POSSIBLE MISPRINT) ISMAIL NUWARAH WERE IMPRISONED FOR 15 YEARS AT HARD LABOR.

5. ACCORDING TO THE STATEMENT OF THE COURT, ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP, ZUHAYR SHUGAYR, COMMITTED SUICIDE WHEN SECURITY MEN ATTEMPTED TO ARREST HIM. THIS WAS APPARENTLY EXPECTED OF ANY MEMBER OF THE ACO THREATENED WITH CAPTURE.

6. ACCORDING TO THE COURT VERDICT THE GROUP MASKED THEIR CRIMINAL AND TERRORIST ACTS UNDER A POLITICAL COVER. THEY STARTED OPERATIONS BY BOMBING THE US PAVILION AT THE DAMASCUS FAIR ON AUG 14, 1974, AND FOLLOWED THIS WITH VARIOUS OTHER UNSPECIFIED OPERATIONS IN DAMASCUS, ALEPPO AND BEIRUT. (THESE APPARENTLY INCLUDED THE BOMBING OF NCR OFFICES IN DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO LAST OCTOBER AND BOMBINGS IN JANUARY OF THE EGYPTIAN LIAISON OFFICE AND THE JORDANIAN EMBASSY.) THE VERDICT ALSO ALLEGES THAT THE GROUP ROBBED THREE BANKS IN BEIRUT AND HAD PLANNED, BUT LATER CANCELLED, A ROBBERY OF A BRANCH OF THE SYRIAN COMMERCIAL BANK. APPARENTLY THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 02935 020949Z

GROUP WAS WELL FINANCED SINCE THE VERDICT STATES THEY HAD RENTED NINE HOUSES IN DAMASCUS AND ONE IN ALEPPO. IT ALSO CLAIMS THAT "MOST" OF THOSE ACCUSED "CONFESSED" THEIR CRIMINAL ACTS.

7. THE VERDICT CLAIMS THAT THE ACO HAD 20-22 MEMBERS IN LEBANON, 5-7 IN KUWAIT AND NINE IN SYRIA. THERE IS NO EXPLANATION OF WHY THOSE SENTENCED IN DAMASCUS TOTAL 14

WHEN THE SYRIAN CELL INCLUDED ONLY NINE. PRESUMABLY SOME OF THOSE SENTENCED MUST HAVE MADE THEIR PERMANENT RESIDENCE IN LEBANON. APPARENTLY GHADBAN AND NAYIF ARE AMONG THOSE WHO RESIDED IN LEBANON.

8. THE VERDICT MAKES NO MENTION OF THE BOMBING OF SEVERAL SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICES IN DAMASCUS IN THE PAST YEAR. HOWEVER, COLONEL TAL'AT JAMIL, A MEMBER OF THE COURT, TOLD DATT EVENING OF 1 AUGUST THAT THE ACO WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE BOMBINGS. JAMIL ALSO SAID THAT THE DETECTION AND APPREHENSION OF THE SYRIAN CELL WAS THE WORK OF THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. HE SAID THEY ARE CERTAIN THEY HAVE ARRESTED ALL MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION IN SYRIA, BUT HE WAS JUST AS CERTAIN THAT THERE WERE OTHERS STILL ON THE LOOSE IN LEBANON.

9 VERDICTS OF STATE SECURITY COURTS ARE NOT APPEALABLE BUT MUST BE CONFIRMED BY THE PRESIDENT WHO CAN COMMUTE SENTENCES IF HE WISHES. APPARENTLY PRESIDENT ASAD CHOSE NOT TO EXERCISE HIS COMMUTATION AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO THOSE SENTENCED TO DEATH.

10. COMMENT: IT HAS BEEN WIDELY ACCEPTED IN DAMASCUS THAT THE BOMBING OF A T LEAST THE SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICES HAD BEEN THE WORK OF IRAQI SYMPATHIZERS. THIS ASPECT HAS, HOWEVER, RECEIVED NO PLAY IN REPORTS OF THE TRIAL PROCEEDINGS NOR IN PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THE FINAL VERDICT. IN THIS CONNECTION, HOWEVER, COURT CHAIRMAN AL-YUSIFI, FORMER SPEAKER OF SYRIAN PARLIAMENT,

INDULGED IN FLIGHT OF FANCY DURING POST TRIAL BRIEFING OF JOURNALISTS ASSERTING ACO MEMBERS HAD NOT REALIZED THAT IN WORKING TO HURT SYRIA THEY WERE FALLING IN WITH "AMERICAN PLAN" TO WEAKEN SYRIA DOMESTICALLY SO IT WOULD BE A LESS EFFECTIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DAMASC 02935 020949Z

OPPONENT OF ISRAEL. THIS INANITY WAS PUBLISHED IN LOCAL PRESS BUT, AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, WAS NOT CARRIED BY WIRE SERVICES OUTSIDE OF SYRIA. WE AGREE WITH INTERPRETATION OF LOCAL JOURNALIST WHO ATTENDED AL-YUSIFI BRIEFING THAT COURT CHAIRMAN'S TALK RE US "PLAN" TO WEAKEN SYRIA WAS CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO BLUNT POTENTIAL IRAQI PROPAGANDA ATTACK ON DAMASCUS WHICH MIGHT TAKE FORM OF ACCUSING SARG OF PUNISHING "PATRIOTIC ARABS WHO ARE SIMPLY ANTI-US."
MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COURT DECISIONS, TERRORISTS, COMMUNISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC02935
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750267-0607
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750886/aaaacxzt.tel
Line Count: 163
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 DAMASCUS 2584
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <28 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SARG COURT SENTENCES MEMBERS OF TERRORIST "ARAB COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION"
TAGS: PINS, SY, ACO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006